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Teaching less widely used languages with qualitative multimedia resources

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to show some information regarding the use of qualitative multimedia resources that are available for such teaching staff who teaches less widely used and taught languages at different levels. Nowadays, the information and communication technology is present in all life aspects. In the Internet Era, the educational system should not ignore the new multimedia resources. This category includes the computer, representing the ultimate tool that offers a new dimension for the learning and teaching activity. The computer has been mainly associated to the Internet, a giant library and a source of information for all domains. As teachers of foreign languages, we consider that Internet represents a tool allowing for many possibilities of didactic use. The main objective for using Internet is to develop the skills for communication, for oral and written message.

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Keywords: less widely used languages; qualitative multimedia resources; educational technologies; communication skills

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present some information regarding the use of qualitative multimedia resources that are available for such teaching staff who teaches less widely used and taught languages at different levels. Nowadays, the information and communication technology is present in all life aspects. In the Internet Era, the educational system should not ignore the new multimedia resources. This category includes the computer, representing the ultimate tool that offers a new dimension for the learning and teaching activity. The computer has been mainly associated to the Internet, a giant library and a source of information for all domains. As teachers

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of foreign languages, we consider that Internet represents a tool allowing for many possibilities of didactic use. The main objective for using Internet is to develop the skills for communication, for oral and written message.

The digital era represents a benchmark for teachers. At the same time we are aware of the fact that no matter what kind of technology might have access to our classroom, nothing will ever substitute a good teacher. The recipe for a successful teaching consists in that combination of good teaching and advancing technology that can create a revolution in learning, where students are prepared not only to learn, but also to create, to communicate, to connect and collaborate with people all over the world. Nowadays, educational technologies available to us bring the best opportunity for students, empowering them for their own future, for becoming successful in life. Integration of the Internet in the classroom can be achieved under different matters. The huge amount of on-line exercises is a means of exploiting the electronic documents. These exercises are used just like any other classic exercises, except for the fact that they are self – correcting. The students can work by themselves and re-do these exercises as many times as they want. The self-correcting nature allows for the removal of any judgment- feeling and releases the learning process of the burden and constraints of performance. On-line exercises may be operated in addition to the conventional teaching methods, but they may become an example themselves for the systematic re-use of vocabulary and grammar.

2. Present educational challenges for teachers of less widely used languages

2.1. Language technology and educational options for the 21st century

According to a UNESCO report on multilingualism, languages are an essential medium for the enjoyment of fundamental rights, such as political expression, education and participation in society (Directorate General of the UNESCO, 2007)

Internet offers a wide variety of applications for language teaching and language technology, such as language data, which represents a key resource for both teachers and students when analysing and collecting information about a natural language. One of the most commonly used web methods and application is the search of a word, phrase or larger texts in the target language. Each language has its particularities and that is why search involves a lot of complex language technology. For example, Romanian has the *ț, ș, ă, î, â* letters which on the Internet appear in a Romanian search as *t, s, a, i, a*, and it takes a lot of time and work to match them correctly. On the other hand, for other less widely used and taught languages, with the help of Google search engine, which offers spelling correction for misspelled words and incorporates basic semantic search capabilities that can improve search accuracy by analysing the meaning of terms in the search query context (Perez, 2009) we can use the automatic web translator to automatically translate web content pages from one language to another. Some European funded projects that deal with the Romanian language technology for educational purposes and facilitates the search and translation of language content available on the Internet which are worth mentioning the following: See- ERA.net (Machine Translation Systems for Balkan Languages), ATLAS (Applied Technologies for Content Management Systems Using Natural Language), BALKANET (which built a network of aligned wordnets for Balkan languages) There are also some national projects that represent valuable sources for Internet Romanian language technology and applications: e- DTLR (The Romanian Thesaurus Dictionary in electronic form), STAR (A System for Machine Translation for Romanian).

The resources available on the Internet represent a means of acquiring knowledge by means of original documents. Submission of original documents represents a motivating factor not only for the student, but also for the teacher who can keep in touch with the culture of the respective foreign language. This learning matter is important due to the fact that it reduces and fights against the stereotypes. The resources that are easier to be used and integrated into this study are on-line exercises, grammar –based or lexical exercises. Other types of resources that may be easily used are: learning websites that offer activities and exercises grouped around certain topics, as well as those websites offering genuine, real and original documents and content (images and texts). An

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